

the silence of the cloister by a few monks who were less enthusiastic zealots than their contemporaries, the musty manuscripts of antiquity lay concealed from their vindictive destroyers until the cloud of ignorance and barbarism began to vanish and the slumbering muse awoke under the happy administration of Pope Julius the second. Literature began to regain somewhat of its former estimation, and in the succeeding reign of Leo Xth the Greek and Roman Classics were revived and admired with the same rapturous attachment as in the days of Augustus. From this era learning began to be more extensively diffused over the continent of Europe and Classical Literature emerging from its dark retreat and finding its way into more extensive circulation fell in with the taste of the Northern European and has ever since been studied with an increasing assiduity.

As there is implanted in our nature by the hand which framed us a conscience which fixed the standard of moral rectitude, so also we are gifted with a faculty which decides on the merit of the productions of genius. It may lie dormant during a state of barbarism—it may be blinded by prejudice—or warped by envy, but when illuminated by reason and influenced by no unhallowed motive it candidly discriminates between what is excellent and defective in the products of the mind. This principle constitutes the tribunal of literature. On its slow verdict depends the fate of authors; and if we would pronounce him excellent who has merely endured the dilapidations of time, what shall we say of those who in addition to this have undergone so many perils? Who converted the rude warrior into the scholar; who turned the proud conquerors of the world into the polished votaries of the muses, who defying the savage violence of the Goths and Vandals the ill directed zeal of the early christians, and the fire of the bloody Saracen, have corresponded to the natural taste of mankind wherever they have been thoroughly understood. Nor do they require any superior degree of sagacity to discover the charms by which they have captivated the scholar in all enlightened nations.

To pass over the melody and harmony of those languages in which they are written—to say nothing of the influence which they are found to exert in strengthening and perfecting the various faculties of the mind, their unaffected simplicity and elegance of style—its superiority over the hyperbolical manner of the Orientals, and the turgid pompousness of those literary ephemera which are sometimes foisted into a momentary favor, together